

Statement of Marvin Bethea, 9/11 First Responder, Paramedic
To the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Subcommittee on Government Management, Organization, and Procurement
Hearing on 9/11 Health Effects: Federal monitoring and Treatment of Residents and
Responders
Washington, DC
February 28, 2007

Good afternoon. I would like to take this time to thank our elected officials for giving me the opportunity to testify at this hearing. My name is Marvin Bethea, and I was a NYC 911 Paramedic for the private hospitals. When I was dispatched by the NYC Fire Department from the borough of Queens to respond to the World Trade Center, I did. As I crossed the 59th, I was informed by phone that a big jetliner just crashed into the second tower. We knew this was no accident this was a terrorist attack.

Did we say, "We shouldn't go this is a terrorist attack"? Absolutely not, because we understood we had a duty to act and a responsibility to protect the city state and country that we love so much. I survived the collapse of both towers. Here we are five years later and we are fighting for healthcare and financial compensation. Can you imagine if it took me five years to respond to the World Trade Center what would my city, state and country think of me? I, like so many others, did what President Kennedy asked of us when he said "Ask not what your country can do for you ask what you can do for your country."

What did doing for our country get us? We got sick, injured and financially ruined. I went from being a happy, hard working paramedic to becoming a disabled paramedic with numerous health problems. The last day I worked was January 8th 2004. I went from taking 2 medicines before 9/11 to taking 15 medicines (show medicine chart). I am a broke man that has been given a slow death sentence. I pray to God every day that I don't develop any new health problems like cancer. I saw and heard my government promise, on a city, state and federal level, that we wouldn't be forgotten. They forgot. You can't tease us now by allocating some funds for treatment that will only last maybe a few months. People are starting to get treatment, only to be threatened with the fact that it may last only for a few months. That is cruel. This is equivalent to a man who hasn't eaten for the past three weeks and now you give him a steak. You ask him, "Do you like that steak?" after he had three bites of the steak and he tells you that it's the best steak he ever had, and your response is, "Enjoy it because you are not get anymore." Like I said before, this is very cruel.

I am extremely grateful for the \$25 million President Bush has pledged. Here is the problem with that: Senators Clinton and Schumer's 9/11 Heroes Health Improvement Act calls for \$1.9 billion in funding. Giving \$25 million is like me asking you, "Can I borrow \$100,000?" and you say, "See me today and I will take care of you." When I see you, you give me ten dollars and act as if you are doing me a favor. It is imperative that treatment centers like Mt. Sinai Health For Heroes Program are continually funded. Mt. Sinai and

other programs like them offer occupational health doctors. These doctors are specially trained and know what to look for, and treat the horrible things we have been exposed to.

Financial compensation is another absent component of this equation. It is no fault of our own that we can't work anymore. We need to open up the 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund like it was. What good is treatment if I am sleeping in my car and I have lost my family? If I don't have high blood pressure or depression, I will have it now for sure. The military has a saying, "We leave no soldier behind." 9/11 was an act of war against this nation. You must not leave anyone affected by 9/11 behind. Thank you.